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PERSONNEL QUESTIONS: OTHER PERSONNEL QUESTIONS

Competitive examinations at the P-3 level

Report of the Secretary-General

INTRODUCTION

1. The present report on the implementation of competitive examinations at the P-3 level is submitted in response to the request made by the General Assembly in paragraph 15 of resolution 45/239 of 21 December 1990.

I. PROGRESS REPORT

A. Background

2. Under the terms of recommendation 43 of the Group of High-Level Intergovernmental Experts to Review the Efficiency of the Administrative and Financial Functioning of the United Nations, 1/ subsequently approved by the General Assembly in resolution 41/213, the Group endorsed "... the principle of recruitment of the staff through national competitive examinations for posts at the P-1 to P-3 levels ...".

3. The recommendation to fill entry-level posts at the P-1 and P-2 levels through competitive examinations has been successfully implemented. From 1988 to the present, 194 candidates have been recruited from 32 Member States that were previously underrepresented or below mid-point. Seventy-six of the 194 candidates recruited (39 per cent) were women.

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* A/47/150.

B. Competitive examinations at the P-3 level held in 1991

4. The first P-3 level examinations were conducted on an experimental basis in four Member States in 1991: Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Italy and Japan. As competitive examinations for P-1/P-2 levels were held in some of those countries, or in neighbouring countries, the overall cost of the operation was reduced. Two occupational groups were selected, economics and administration, on the basis of projected vacancies in those groups.

5. Entrance requirements were set to be consistent with general recruitment requirements established for the P-3 level. To be eligible, candidates should not be more than 39 years of age and should hold a second-level university degree or an equivalent qualification from a university or an institution of equivalent status in a field relevant to the occupation concerned. Candidates were also required to have at least four years of professional experience in either administration or economics.

6. Ninety-two candidates met the minimum requirements for the examinations and took the written examination in May 1991, 62 in economics and 30 in administration. In addition to papers in specific substantive areas in accordance with existing vacancies or vacancies that were projected to exist in the two occupational groupings, the candidates' skills in analytical capacity and ability to draft were also examined as those skills were essential to the above-mentioned substantive areas. Finally, candidates were tested on their knowledge of international affairs.

7. Following the marking of the examination papers, candidates underwent an oral examination in October 1991, which included a work-oriented task and an interview which assessed, among other factors, their professional experience and aptitudes. All portions of the examination were evaluated by a Board consisting of staff members who worked in the fields being tested and staff members of the Office of Human Resources Management who had extensive experience in testing and interviewing.

8. The recruitment freeze and the change in the promotion system decided upon at the end of 1991 somewhat delayed the appointment process at the P-3 level. However, two successful candidates received an offer of appointment in the occupational group of administration and two other successful candidates received an offer of appointment in the occupational group of economics.

C. Competitive examinations at the P-3 level held in 1992

9. As indicated orally to the Fifth Committee during the forty-sixth session of the General Assembly, a second round of P-3 level examinations was held in five Member States in April 1992: Finland, Germany, Japan, Russian Federation and United States of America. Examinations were administered in four occupational groups: economics, public information, statistics and social affairs including demography. Three hundred and fifty-four applications were received, of which the Board of Examiners convoked 198. Eighty-three

candidates took the examination in the occupational group of economics; 24 candidates in the occupational group of public information; 23 in the occupational group of statistics; 17 in the occupational group of social affairs and 4 in demography.

10. Following the marking of the examination papers, candidates will undergo the oral examination and interviews in the last quarter of 1992.

D. Planning and procedures for competitive examinations at the P-3 level

11. Based on the experience acquired in 1991 and 1992 the following policies and procedures were put into place to administer examinations at the P-3 level:

(a) Competitive examinations for recruitment of P-3 level staff are devised in consultation with the Governments concerned. Confidentiality of the process is a priority consideration. As mandated in General Assembly resolution 35/210, testing methods employed take into account cultural and linguistic diversity of the membership of the United Nations;

(b) Vacancies are defined and offered to each Member State taking into account its geographical representation. In addition to an agreed-upon number of posts that are guaranteed to Member States, a reserve list also is established from which future vacancies may be filled.

12. Based on the experience acquired from the 1991 and 1992 P-3 examinations, posts will be earmarked and reviewed in other occupational groups throughout the Secretariat, in cooperation with the relevant Departments and Offices in order to ensure that the additional specialized examinations are properly focused.

13. Consultations with Governments will be expanded and, after a careful analysis of vacancies, the occupational groupings to be tested determined in accordance with the needs of the Secretariat. The analysis of vacancies takes into account the need to earmark sufficient posts to cover promotion of deserving staff to the P-3 level in order to ensure the career development of staff serving at the P-2 level.

14. The placement and examination process is coordinated with departments and offices, including those away from Headquarters, to ensure that vacancies are filled in a timely manner and with well-qualified candidates who are highly suitable for the posts they will be filling.

II. FUTURE COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS AT THE P-3 LEVEL

15. The implementation of the 1992 P-3 examination in four occupational groups for five Member States has been accomplished within existing resources. In view of the current financial situation, it is proposed to continue for the time being administering P-3 competitive examinations on a rotating basis for up to five Member States annually in up to four occupational groups. Where posts cannot be filled through internal promotions or through P-3 national competitive recruitment examinations, it is proposed to recruit at the P-3 level outside of the examinations process through the traditional recruitment methods.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 49 (A/41/49).